published. However, as per the National Sample Survey Organisation, which has recently released the figures of its 53rd round, the literacy rate at the end of 1997 was 62% and the projected number of illiterates was 29.44 crores agaisnt a total projected population of 95.30 crores.

As per the 53rd Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation the States/ UTs where the literacy rates are below the projected national average of 62% are Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Dedra and Nagar Haveli.

The latest projections indicate that the illiteracy in the country is steadily decreasing. However, the reasons for the slow progress of literacy in the above states are, inter alia, large number of illiterates, dearth of committed volunteers, lack of literacy tradition movements, widening gender bias against women, diverse socio cultural factors, etc.

Dismal State of Basic Education

1188. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of a very dismal picture of the basic edcuation as projected through a public report which appeared in the Times of India dated 3rd January, 1999;

(b) whether Government have analysed the said public report; if so, the details of such analysis; and

(c) whether Government propsoe to make education a fundamental right; if so, by when and what steps Government have taken in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) and (b) The news-item refers to excerpts from the Public Report on Basic Educaiton in India (PROBE) prepared by an independent group of researchers and released in January, 1999.

Government is generally aware of the contents of the report. The preliminary response of the Department to issue referred to in the news-items is as follows:—

(i) A positive change is discernible in the attitude of parents towards their children's education.

(ii) Though all State Government have exempted children from payment of tuition fees upto upper primary level, parents are required to meet other costs of schooling of children. These are sought to be mitigated by provision of scholarships and incentives such as free textbooks, uniforms, Midday Meals, etc.

(iii) Several socio-economic and cultural reasons have been cited as reasons for non-attendence of primary school by out of shcool children. These include involvement of children in domestic chores, agricultural work and other activities.

(c) The Constitution (Eighty-Third Amendment) Bill, 1997 to make right to free and compulsory education for children in the age group of 6 to 14 years a Fundamental Right has been introduced in the Rajya Sabha on July 28, 1997.

Central Schools in the Country

1189. PROF. RAM BAKHSH SINGH VERMA:
SHRIMATI MALTI SHARMA:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Central schools approved to be opened in the country during last three years, giving State-wise details thereof;